

GOVERNMENT CENTER
PROJECT AREA REPORT

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The Government Center Project Area is bounded generally by Dock Square, Union Street, Hanover Street, Blackstone Street, Haymarket Square, Merrimac Street, Staniford Street, Cambridge Street, Pemberton Square, Tremont Street, Court Street, and State Street. The boundaries of the Area are specifically described in the Notice of Public Hearing, Exhibit 1 and are shown on the "Existing Land Use Map," Exhibit 8.

Between 1959 and the Spring of 1963, employees, first of the Boston City Planning Board, and later of both the City of Boston Building and Health Departments and the Boston Redevelopment Authority, carried out a series of surveys and studies with respect to the character and condition of the Urban renewal area as a whole. These surveys and studies included, among other things, an investigation and analysis of existing land use, building and dwelling unit conditions, environmental conditions, and social and economic characteristics. Sources of survey and study data included the U. S. Census of Population and the U. S. Census of Housing of 1960 and previous census periods, Sanborn Atlas, records and studies of the Boston City Planning Board, the Assessing, Building, Real Property, Parks and Recreation, Health, Fire, Police, Traffic and Public Works Departments of the City of Boston, and actual field surveys made both by and for the Boston Redevelopment Authority.

Actual field surveys of all land uses, the exterior and interior conditions and defects of most of the buildings in the urban renewal area were made in 1959. Copies of the Structural Inspection Schedules used in the field survey of land uses and interior and exterior building inspection are available for inspection and review, Exhibit 7. All buildings for which these schedules were used were inspected for the following conditions:

- (1) Deteriorated roof or evidence of water leaks through the roof.
- (2) Inside stairs with steps worn or broken or both or with rails missing or broken.
- (3) Inside floors worn or sagging or in poor repair.
- (4) Inside walls or ceilings with any or all of the following conditions:

GOVERNMENT EXHIBIT
PROJECT AREA REPORT

The Government Center Project Area is bounded generally by East Street, Union Street, Beacon Street, Blackstone Street, Myrtle Street, West Street, Second Street, Cambridge Street, and Boston Avenue. The project area is bounded on the north by the Boston Avenue and on the south by the Cambridge Street. The project area is bounded on the east by the Boston Avenue and on the west by the Cambridge Street. The project area is bounded on the north by the Boston Avenue and on the south by the Cambridge Street. The project area is bounded on the east by the Boston Avenue and on the west by the Cambridge Street.

Between 1920 and the year of 1937, various, first of the Boston City Planning Board, and later of the City of Boston Building and Health Department and the Boston Redevelopment Authority, carried out a series of surveys and studies with respect to the character and condition of the urban area as a whole. These surveys and studies included, among other things, an inventory of existing buildings and structures, and a study of the character and condition of the urban area as a whole. These surveys and studies included, among other things, an inventory of existing buildings and structures, and a study of the character and condition of the urban area as a whole. These surveys and studies included, among other things, an inventory of existing buildings and structures, and a study of the character and condition of the urban area as a whole.

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- (1) Descriptive notes on character and condition of the urban area as a whole.
- (2) Maps and plans showing the character and condition of the urban area as a whole.
- (3) Maps and plans showing the character and condition of the urban area as a whole.
- (4) Maps and plans showing the character and condition of the urban area as a whole.

- (a) Easily seen cracks
 - (b) Holes or badly worn surfaces
 - (c) Evidence of leaks or missing plaster.
- (5) Broken or defective windows.
 - (6) Faulty Foundations.
 - (7) Split or badly deteriorated framing.
 - (8) Outside walls evidencing any or all of the following conditions:
 - (a) Holes or badly worn surfaces, including need for repointing of brick walls.
 - (b) Broken or loose surfaces
 - (c) Visibly out of plumb or horizontal alignment.
 - (9) Daylight obstructed.
 - (10) Windows and skylights obstructed, or mechanical ventilation equipment unopenable or both.
 - (11) Accumulation of combustible debris, particularly under stairways or in furnace rooms.
 - (12) Furnace room not fireproof.
 - (13) Furnace room not ventilated to fresh air.
 - (14) Type of heating.
 - (15) Availability of hot water in the structure.
 - (16) Existence of sprinklers for fire protection.
 - (17) Obsolete plumbing, and in particular the presence of toilets commonly known as "flush hoppers".

- (18) Exposed electrical panels or exposed electrical wiring or both.
- (19) Public areas lacking lighting fixtures or containing un-openable lighting fixtures.
- (20) Type of elevator, if any.
- (21) Total number of toilets in the structure.
- (22) Toilets not ventilated.
- (23) Existence of front stairways, rear stairways, fire escapes, or indirect means of egress in multi-floor buildings.
- (24) Vermin infestation reported or evidenced.
- (25) Means of access clear at ground level.
- (26) Means of access to a street or alley.
- (27) Enclosed stairways.
- (28) Merchandise delivery from street, alley or other location.
- (29) Existence of off-street parking on the premises.
- (30) Existence of off-street loading facilities.

The information gathered was analyzed by City Planning Board and Boston Redevelopment Authority staff personnel. Data gathered as a result of this survey was used to prepare a preliminary land use map for the Government Center Urban Renewal Area, and make tentative evaluations of the conditions of structures.

During March and April of 1961 the surveys made during 1959 were re-examined. Official records were again analyzed. Buildings not inspected in 1959 were surveyed (except for one building to which access was denied). The land use map was corrected as of April, 1961 (see "Existing Land Use Map", Exhibit g) and on the basis of carefully planned and statistically valid sampling procedures, interior building inspections were made during the week of April 17, 1961 to check the continued validity of the 1959 survey. In this

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recheck inspection, inspectors of the Building and Health Departments were again used, utilizing the same structural inspection schedule as were used in 1959.

As a result of this re-examination, the "Building Deficiencies Map" (Exhibit 9) was prepared. Structures in the urban renewal area were divided into four categories.

- (a) Buildings with deficiencies.
- (b) Buildings with deficiencies but not substandard.
- (c) Buildings substandard
- (d) Undetermined condition--access not granted by owner.

(1) These surveys formed the basis for the finding by the Boston Redevelopment Authority on May 3, 1961, that a portion of the urban renewal area designated for "early land acquisition" was a "decadent" area within the meaning of the Massachusetts Housing Authority Law as required by Section 26P of that law. Subsequent to such finding, the Authority did, in fact, acquire most of the portion of the urban renewal area so designated and has demolished a substantial number of the buildings therein. The statistics and conclusions in this report relate to the entire project area prior to demolition except that as to unacquired buildings, studies made in April, 1963, have verified the validity of the former conclusions.

A structure was determined to be substandard if any of the following conditions was discovered on inspection:

- (1) The roof was deteriorated and in need of major repair over more than 25% of its total area.
- (2) More than 25% of the total inside floor area sagged.
- (3) Inside walls had holes or badly worn surfaces over more than 25% of the total area.
- (4) Plaster was missing or leaks apparent over more than 25% of the inside wall area.
- (5) The structure's foundation was faulty for more than 25% of its length.
- (6) The framing was split or deteriorated over more than 25% of the building.
- (7) The building was visibly out of plumb or line.
- (8) Obsolete plumbing
- (9) There was evidence of vermin infestation.

To qualify for Federal assistance, the project area must contain building deficiencies of such degree and extent that public action is necessary to eliminate and prevent the spread of deterioration and blight. Such serious deficiencies include:

- (1) Defects to a point warranting clearance
- (2) Deteriorating condition because of a defect not correctable by normal maintenance.
- (3) Extensive minor defects which taken collectively are causing the building to have a deteriorating effect on the surrounding area.
- (4) Inadequate original construction or alterations.
- (5) Inadequate or unsafe plumbing, heating, or electrical facilities.

(6) Other equally significant building deficiencies.

The buildings within the project area with one or more of these deficiencies are shown on the "Building Deficiencies Map", Exhibit 8.9

In addition to the buildings survey, a sample survey of dwelling units was conducted by inspectors from the City of Boston Health and Building Departments in May and June of 1959. Copies of the Dwelling Unit Inspection Schedules used in the sample are available for inspection and review, Exhibit 4.7

The sample consisted of 516 or 88.4% of the 584 dwelling units in the project area. At least one dwelling unit in each of the 123 structures containing dwelling units was inspected. Substandard units were found in 12 of the 15 blocks in the project that contain dwelling units. Only 5 dwelling units were found in the three blocks with no substandard units. One unit in each of these three blocks was inspected.

A dwelling unit was considered substandard if any of the following conditions was discovered on inspection:

- (1) The dwelling unit had no installed sink.
- (2) There was no private kitchen.
- (3) Daylight was deficient or the unit had interior rooms (except bathrooms).
- (4) There were not two means of egress.
- (5) The private toilet had no means of ventilation.
- (6) The unit did not have a private toilet.
- (7) There was no private bath.
- (8) The unit had small rooms (7 x 10 feet or less).

During March and April of 1961, the surveys made during 1959 were re-examined. Official records were again analyzed on the basis of carefully planned and statistically valid sampling procedures.

Entire building inspections were made during the week of April 17, 1961, to check the continued validity of the 1959 survey. In this re-check inspection, inspectors of the Building and Health Departments were again used, utilizing the same Dwelling Unit Inspection Schedule forms as were used in 1959. The results were compared with the 1959 survey and found to be substantially the same, demonstrating the continued validity of the 1959 survey.

The results of all surveys and studies with respect to the character and condition of the Government Center Urban Renewal Area can be set forth as follows:

(1) The Government Center Area was found to be an area in which commercial buildings predominated. The gross area of the Project is 60.5 acres, of which 26.5 acres were found to be devoted to streets and alleys, leaving a net area of 34 acres. Of this net area about 24 acres were found to be occupied by buildings and yards and approximately 10 acres devoted to off-street parking. Land improved with buildings, street or other improvements was found to be distributed generally throughout the entire area.

(2) The Project Area was found to include 379⁽²⁾ structures containing approximately 4,622,000 square feet of floor space exclusive of basements. Of this total amount, about 16.3 per cent, or approximately 700,000 square feet, were vacant.

(3) The Project Area was found to be devoted to a variety of uses, including many structures having mixed uses. Twenty-one structures were predominantly office establishments; 137 predominantly retail or consumer service establishments; 43 predominantly wholesale or storage establishments; 38 predominantly manufacturing establishments and 10 structures predominantly institutional or public

(2) Of the 379 buildings in the project area, 378 were inspected and one was not because access was denied. For this reason, the statistics which follow in this report are based on the 378 buildings surveyed.

establishments. Also included in this area were approximately 17 lodging houses and about 584 dwelling units.

(4) The Project Area was found to be solidly built up with a congested mass of obsolete structures occupying close to 100 per cent of each block, except where demolition had resulted in parking lots. Many buildings were found to be conversions from original residential use and many were designed for the non-residential requirements of the last century.

(5) 342 structures or 90.5 per cent of all the 378 inspected structures in the Project Area were found to be substandard. 270 or 71.4 per cent had three or more conditions of the type and degree listed above as criteria for substandardness. An additional 36 or 9.5 per cent had two of these conditions and 36 structures or 9.5 per cent had one such condition. All but 2 of the 41 blocks in the Project Area contained structures with three or more such conditions. One block contained only one structure which had but one such condition and one block contained only one structure with no such conditions.

(6) There were found to be 584 dwelling units occupying 4.4 acres in the Project Area averaging out to 131 dwelling units per net acre of land. Such dwelling units were found to be contained, for the most part, in elevatorless, row buildings, three or four stories high. In many instances the first floor of the building was found to be devoted to commercial use.

(7) 351 or 92.9 per cent of the structures in the Project Area were found to be non-fire proof or of frame construction. Only 7.1 per cent of the structures are fireproof or fire resistive.

(8) 196 or 51.8 per cent of the structures in the Project Area were found to have roofs which were deteriorated and in need of major repair.

(9) 170 or 44.9 per cent of the structures in the Project Area were found to have walls which were deteriorated and in need of major repairs.

(10) 200 or 53 per cent of the structures were found to have outside walls which had broken or loose surfaces or holes or badly worn surfaces and were in need of major repairs.

(11) 232 or 61.4 per cent of the structures were found to have inside walls or ceilings which had cracks, holes or badly worn surfaces.

(12) 240 or 63.9 per cent of the structures had evidence of leaks and/or missing plaster on inside walls or ceilings.

(13) 179 or 47.4 per cent of the structures in the Project Area were reported as being vermin infested, resulting in a health hazard.

(14) In 95 or 25.1 per cent of the structures in the Project Area, combustible debris was found accumulated to a degree resulting in a serious fire hazard.

(15) 148 or 39.1 per cent of the structures in the Project Area were found to lack hot running water.

(16) 236 or 62.4 per cent of the structures in the Project Area were found to contain exposed electrical wiring constituting a hazard.

(17) 286 or 75.7 per cent of the structures were found to have floors that sagged.

(18) 104 or 27.5 per cent of the structures were found to have faulty foundations.

(19) 110 or 29.3 per cent of the structures were found to have split or deteriorated framing.

(20) 141 or 37.3 per cent of the structures in the Project Area were found to possess exposed electrical panels constituting a hazard.

(21) 258 or 68.3 per cent of the structures in the Project Area were found to have obsolete plumbing.

(22) 177 or 46.8 per cent of the structures in the Project Area were found to have toilets without proper ventilation.

(23) 49 or 13 per cent of the structures in the Project Area were found to lack artificial lighting in public hallways, constituting a hazard.

(24) 311 or 82.4 per cent of the structures in the Project Area were found to have stairways that were not enclosed, constituting a fire hazard.

(25) 265 or 98.8 per cent of the non-residential structures in the Project Area were found to lack off-street loading facilities, constituting a fire hazard and a traffic hazard.

(26) About 40 per cent of the lodging houses in the Project Area were found to have lodging rooms which lacked access to two means of egress, and about 75 per cent were found to have less than one toilet for each eight (8) persons of licensed capacity.

(27) In recent years studies show that the Project Area has experienced substantial changes in economic and business conditions, and buildings demolished with no likelihood of replacement.

(a) Number of Businesses in the area declined over 30% from 1947 to 1957, as compared with a decline of 5 per cent for the entire downtown area.

(b) Number of employees in the area declined over 20% from 1947 to 1957, as compared with a decline of 7 per cent for the entire downtown area.

(c) Estimated vacant floor space in 1959 for the Project Area was 18.6 per cent of the total floor space as compared with about 5 per cent for the entire downtown area.

(d) Assessed valuations for the Project Area totalled about \$35,000,000 in 1946 and about \$24,000,000 in 1960; a decline of 31 per cent compared with 2 per cent for the city as a whole.

(28) The area was found to be seriously deficient in community and recreational facilities. There were no churches or schools in the Project Area. The area was found to have only one playground of 0.095 acres. This compares to National Recreational Association standards which would call for playground area totalling 5.40 acres for the estimated number of people able to live in the Project Area.

